REGENERATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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PLANTING SEEDS OF CHANGE

Richard Piacentini, the visionary CEO of Pittsburgh’s Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, famously has written with regard to the challenges of environmental stress, “Being Less Bad is Not Good Enough Anymore.”

He has invited the entire public gardening community to join Phipps in approaching our common work with the tools of regenerative thinking and design. The approach is not one of “sustainability” alone; sustaining a system that is locked into a downward spiral when interwoven with other systems smacks of simply “being less bad.”

Nor is it an approach of resiliency alone. The resilience of Eastern rivers and bald eagles has not allowed us to engage with more manageable challenges, but to be stunned by the shifting conversation. Instead of the celebration of eagles nesting along the James, a river increasingly free of the pesticide Kepone, we wonder about the future of that river’s estuary should Hampton Roads surrender to rising seas.

The regenerative approach, as detailed by academics, architects and systems professionals, is empirical, nuanced and complex. A common metaphor for regenerative design is, fortunately for our use, the work of gardening. How so? When done with skill, with ready hands and open eyes, a gardener learns from the plants as much as she works with them. When done with care, with informed perspective and thoughtful application, a gardener treats the landscape with tenderness, treading lightly on holy ground. When done with gratitude, with compassion for the gifts of the earth meant to be shared with others, a gardener works to give back to the earth as much or more as is pulled from her. When done with love, a gardener plants, tends and harvests for neighbors unseen and generations unborn. Regenerative.
Fogel revitalized a challenging area along the Sydnor Lake shoreline as a working model of landscaping that enhances the local setting while positively impacting Virginia’s waterways.
Best practices call for regenerative landscapes. These repair past environmental damage and evolve into increasingly healthier ecosystems for future generations.

Senior Horticulturist Elizabeth Fogel studied the latest theories for sustainable and regenerative landscapes by visiting 10 eco-focused botanical gardens over the past two years. Her cross-country travel and hands-on research were made possible by the Frank L. Robinson Endowed Chair in Horticulture.

In downtown Chicago, Fogel was awed by the Lurie Garden, 2.5 acres of meadow-style plantings alive with pollinators and wildlife, though juxtaposed with towering steel skyscrapers. Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware had transformed several formal gardens using native plants, nurtured with custom-blended compost teas and integrated pest management. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Texas flaunted breathtaking flora, supported by a highly effective eco-management system.

Practices such as these are being selectively incorporated by Lewis Ginter and can be used in home landscapes, too. If you’ve enjoyed the new garden along the edge of Sydnor Lake between the Lotus Bridge and CWDKids Tree House, you’ve seen a direct result of Fogel’s research. A team of horticulture staff and volunteers helped implement her vision for this landscape created with 1,800 plugs of natives representing 36 different types of plants. Turn the page for a closer look at some of them.

As the natural world yearns for remediation, Lewis Ginter demonstrates solutions—for the health of our community and biosphere. Ask Fogel why regenerative landscapes are important to her and she gives professional and personal reasons. “Not only is it the right thing to do,” she shares, “it’s insuring the future for our children.”
Native plants and native animals (including insects and all-important pollinators) have a history of thousands of years together. This means native plants provide for wildlife’s needs better than plants that have evolved elsewhere.

In her research of regenerative landscapes, Senior Horticulturist Elizabeth Fogel studied the work of Doug Tallamy, University of Delaware professor and noted author. His books include “Bringing Nature Home” and “The Living Landscape,” which he co-authored with Rick Darke. Tallamy asserts destruction of natural habitat results in a loss of biodiversity and, ultimately, species extinction. This affects everyone because we all depend on the life support plants and animals provide.

The future challenges us to design landscapes to enhance rather than degrade ecosystems. The good news is we can make a difference. Tallamy states since nearly 85% of the U.S. is privately owned, our private properties are an opportunity for long-term conservation if we design them to meet the needs of the life around us.

**What can you do?**

1. **Plant natives.** A few of the Garden’s favorites are shown opposite. Not only do they support wildlife, they are perennials adapted to our environment, often requiring less water than non-natives. Tallamy suggests limiting the use of non-native plants to no more than 30% of the landscape. He explains: “Our concern is not the presence of non-native plants, it’s the absence of native plants.”

2. **Leave cover for wildlife.** Fogel says to consider allowing leaf litter to collect and waiting until late winter/early spring to cut back perennials and ornamental grasses. Many insects and some small animals need this protection for overwintering.

3. **Limit the lawn.** According to Tallamy, 92% of the American landscape is lawn. Recognizing there’s sometimes a need for lawn, he suggests putting turf only where you want to walk.

4. **Use “green” mulch.** Explore using layers of living plants placed closely together to naturally suppress weeds and eliminate the need for bark mulch.

5. **Avoid insecticides.** While it can be frustrating to see the consequences of insects in your landscape, Tallamy suggests we modify our view to allow for some imperfection.

To learn more about native plants in our area, visit:

- plantvirginianatives.org

*Related art exhibit:* “Ancarrow’s List: Native Plants at the River’s Edge” presented by the Plants of the James River Project; VCU’s James Branch Cabell Library, November 4–December 22
Echinacea purpurea (purple coneflower)

Rudbeckia triloba (brown-eyed Susan)

Gaura (beeblossom)

Lobelia cardinalis (cardinal flower)

Ascelpias tuberosa (butterfly weed)

Cephalanthus occidentalis (button bush)
This theory drives Nature’s Notebook, a grassroots monitoring program hosted by the USA National Phenology Network. Thousands of citizen scientists across the country, including 20 Garden volunteers, regularly track seasonal changes through specific observations of a locale’s flora and fauna. The year-round task may be as simple as counting bees in a specified area, or more complex, such as estimating percentages of a tree’s color-changed leaves over time. The local measurables are entered into the program’s national database for collective review.

Since March, Garden participants, including Service Learning students, have observed and recorded data for 10 species, as designated by Nature’s Notebook.

Program benefits are as meaningful as project outcomes. Online identification tools and background information teach participants about nature and the environment, help develop observation skills and reveal trends. The resulting insights influence policymaking, land use and facility siting.

Ultimately, the information demonstrates human impact in the world, reinforcing the need for environmental stewardship.

Scientists rely on data for insight, so more data nets greater insight.

PHENOLOGY

The study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena in relation to climate, plant and animal life.
“Touring the garden, looking and recording patterns and behaviors for Nature’s Notebook made me more aware of the plants and what creatures visit them. Now I’m dead set about working in sustainable energy to preserve our natural resources.”

ABIGAIL McALLISTER
Veritas School and Children’s Education summer intern
The Garden provides biodiversity, which in turn sustains life. This can result in surprise encounters. Volunteer Helen Blencowe recalls walking around a bend one morning and coming face-to-face with a great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*). “I don’t know who was more startled, the heron or me!”  
*Photo by Tom Hennessy.*
Ginter Urban Gardeners do more than create green spaces in Richmond urban neighborhoods. They bring neighbors together to help build stronger communities.

When Ginter Urban Gardeners built a garden adjacent to Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church in historic Jackson Ward, they planted over the foundations of a neighborhood decimated by construction of Interstate 95 in the early 1960s. The garden has become a place for the community to reflect and remember their past as they heal together.

Broad Rock Community Garden, located in an area lacking access to healthy and affordable food, was created to provide a source of fresh food and to be a centerpiece of the community. With a Little Free Library, picnic table and outdoor kitchen area, the garden has naturally evolved into a gathering place where neighbors teach each other cooking, nutrition, yoga and meditation.

The kitchen garden at the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority’s (RBHA) North Campus also provides more than a source of healthy food; it offers an outlet for residents recovering from substance abuse. Therapeutic gardening can help people achieve and maintain long-term recovery. For the residents of RBHA, the new garden has become a healing space for physical, psychological and social growth.
THANK YOU

Your generosity helps make vital programs such as Ginter Urban Gardeners possible. Because of you, we can offer free admission to low-income families, grow fresh produce for the food bank, offer nature-based educational programs for children and so much more. We hope you will consider donating to the Annual Fund today. Together, we’re connecting people through plants to improve this community we share.

We are deeply grateful to our local corporate partner, Sabra Dipping Company, whose community outreach initiative, Plants with a Purpose, is generously supporting our programs to teach children how to grow and enjoy healthy food.

Through these projects and others, Ginter Urban Gardeners are cultivating equity and healing in communities that have suffered economic, environmental, generational and psychological trauma. They are learning and teaching others the skills to build authentic relationships and transform their environments.

Visit beautifulrva.org to learn more.
This year’s Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights’ theme “Magic in the Air” celebrates all manner of items that move through the air, from natural wonders (birds and butterflies), to man-made inventions (kites and airplanes), to fanciful creatures (dragons, unicorns and flying pigs). In this year commemorating the first manned mission to land on the Moon, look for rocket ships and an astronaut.

When visiting, be sure to enjoy the Kelleher Warming Fire in the Children’s Garden.
EVENT
Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights
NEW! Starts the Friday BEFORE Thanksgiving
Nov. 22, 2019–Jan. 6, 2020
Closed Thanksgiving (Nov. 28), Dec. 24 & 25

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES
Merry Mondays
Caroling Tuesdays
Crafty Wednesdays
Musical Thursdays

SPECIAL NIGHTS
Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights Illumination Opening Weekend
Nov. 22–24, 2019

GardenFest for Fidos
Dec. 5, 2019 and Jan. 2, 2020

New Year’s Eve Family Frolic
Dec. 31

MEMBERS
NEW! Members enjoy unlimited free GardenFest visits in November and January

Member Nights (music in Bloemendaal House)
Friday, Nov. 22
Tuesday, Nov. 26
Friday, Nov. 29
Saturday, Nov. 30
Monday, Jan. 6

Visit lewisginter.org or follow on Facebook for more events.
NEW!

• Starts the Friday BEFORE Thanksgiving
• Members enjoy unlimited free GardenFest visits in November and January.
• See page 15 for details!